

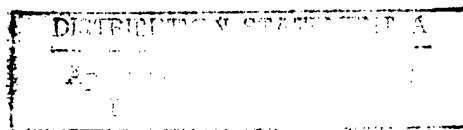


ASPECTS OF PROFESSION  
AND THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

THESIS

Jody B. Dow, Captain, USAF

AFIT/GTM/LAC/98S-3



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ASPECTS OF PROFESSION AND THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

THESIS

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## **Abstract**

The term "Profession" does not have a consistently applied definition within society. In the military, the ambiguity of the definition places military members in a situation where understanding their professional responsibilities is difficult. This thesis examines the characteristics of traditional professions and draws parallels to the military. This study identifies critical characteristics of professional behavior that military members should be aware of in pursuing professionalism. Data were gathered from academic and popular literature for evaluation. Sufficient evidence exists in literature to identify the factors of special knowledge and service orientation of a profession as critical to professional status. The military, though recognized as a profession in society, may more accurately be represented as a collection of professions or a calling with specific professional authority. Special knowledge is the defining characteristic of traditional professions. The knowledge held by professions is not easily attainable by people outside the profession. Military professional knowledge is not clearly defined. This research identifies several inconsistent definitions of military professional knowledge. Orientation can be self-interest or service to a client or society. Orientation is the defining characteristic of a calling. Professions also exhibit a service orientation. The military has traditionally had a strong service orientation. There are indications, however, that this service orientation may be diminishing within the military today.

# ASPECTS OF PROFESSION AND THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

## I. Problem Statement

### What is Military Professionalism?

The term profession, strictly used, as opposed to business or handicraft, is a title of peculiar distinction, coveted by many activities. Thus far, it has been pretty indiscriminately used. Almost any occupation not obviously a business is apt to classify itself as a profession. ...If there is a dancing profession, a baseball profession, an acting profession, a nursing profession, an artistic profession, a musical profession, a literary profession, a medical profession, and a legal profession—to mention no others—the term profession is too vague to be fought for. We may as well let down the bars and permit people to call themselves professional for no better reason than that they choose in this way to appropriate whatever of social distinction may still cling to a term obviously abused. (Flexner, 1915:901-2)

What does it mean to be a professional? The terms “profession,” “professional,” and “professionalism” are not clearly defined in the English language. Chapter III explores the definitions given for “profession,” “occupation,” “vocation,” and “calling.” These terms are confusing and circular, adding ambiguity to the study of professionalism within the military. Additionally, the word “professional” can indicate an individual who is paid for work (opposite of amateur) or suggest that the individual is part of a profession (as opposed to a trade or craft).

Military professionalism encompasses more than simply being paid for work performed. The present research evaluates the term “profession” as it pertains to the military context, focusing on the nature of work performed (i.e., profession as opposed to a trade or craft versus profession as opposite of amateur).

Military officers are held to a high standard in their actions and attitudes.

“Professionalism,” as defined by the military, often means military bearing: ensuring that one’s uniform is pressed and neat, ribbons are correct, boots polished, and hair style is within regulations. The military bearing aspect of professionalism does not, however, capture the entire essence of professionalism.

Most scholars agree that professional status is not discrete, but rather a continuous scale where there are degrees of professionalism (Goode, Hughes, Wilensky, Barber, and others). In discussing the military, Downes states that the military is a recognized profession in society that “has often failed to conform, other than in the most general of terms, to the conceptions of profession as formulated by social scientists” (1985:154). The degree of conformity is an issue addressed by Downes and several other researchers discussing military professionalism (Grace, Blumenson, Dyck, Moskos, and others). Rather than travel over the paths already taken by these researchers, this project focuses on the fundamental characteristics of professions, and on the similarities between the military and the professions that imply special considerations of the military officer.

The purpose of this research is to consider what the word “profession” means in a military, or more accurately, Air Force environment. This thesis considers the concept from a normative perspective, exploring characteristics that should be the center of individual and organizational focus if Air Force members truly wish to be “professional.” These characteristics are drawn from recognized, established professions within society as identified by previous research. Societal norms are used for two primary reasons: 1) the armed forces are a vital part of society and are governed by the parent society’s norms, and 2) apart from military bearing, guidance from within the military is limited

and vague in discussions of professional characteristics desired from its officers. The present research identifies characteristics of “professions” in a literature-based definition of profession with the goal of identifying a baseline set of professional characteristics for military officers. This research focuses not on the question of whether the officer corps is a profession, but rather on the characteristics desirable in an officer corps that considers itself to be “professional.”

### **Research and Investigative Questions**

The purpose of this study is to identify characteristics that are desirable in a professional officer corps. The research question is “*What are the normative characteristics of ‘profession’ that military officers should be aware of?*”

The approach taken to answer this question involves studying established professions, identifying critical characteristics of those professions, and drawing parallels to the military. These parallels provide the basis for determining applicable characteristics in the military context. The following investigative questions are answered in pursuit of an answer to the research question:

1. What established professions have traditionally determined the characteristics of professions?
2. What set of characteristics are essential in the chosen professions?
3. How do the traditional characteristics fit within the military context?
4. Which characteristics are transferable to or critical in the military context?

## **Applications of This Research**

As an association of well-trained individuals motivated and dedicated to a social cause (the defense of our nation), the military organization recognizes the officers within its ranks as professionals. Additionally, the military demands of all members, officer and enlisted alike, professional conduct. While these seem on the surface to be highly laudable goals, there is confusion within the military about the requirements of a profession and the characteristics of professional behavior.

This research studies academic and trade literature discussing the definition of “profession” in context of recognized, or traditional, professions (mainly law, medicine, and theology) and draws parallels with the military situation. There are two primary outputs of this research: 1) drawing connections between the traditional professions and the military, and 2) identifying characteristics evident in established professions that can be applied to the military situation. In making connections between recognized professions and the military, this research clarifies the meaning of the term “profession” within the military context and provides focus for professional activity in the military.

To maintain societal sanction for the armed forces, military members must share a common understanding with society of what it means to be a professional. The implications of having such a common definition are far reaching, both within the military and in the interaction between the military and society. Within the military, a common definition grounded in societal norms will focus the training efforts in military commissioning sources. Such a definition will also promote further research into areas of professional responsibility, such as ethics and identify areas unique to the military context. Finally, in the interaction between the military and society, a common definition

provides a foundation for communication. Sharing a common definition with the parent society is especially critical in the United States due to the requirement for civilian control of the military.

### **Characteristics of the Data**

The data used in this study consist of characteristics of professions and the military officer corps as discussed and defined in literature on the subject. Discrete lists as well as implied definitions are collected and analyzed. Explanations of these characteristics are collected to determine disconnects between authors, time periods, or disciplines. Additional information is analyzed to relate the author of the work to the study. Time of the writing, social environment, the author's background, and the discipline the author is writing about influence the perspective of the author (defending an emerging profession, attempting to define profession in general, etc.). In turn, individual perspective influences the definitions and conclusions drawn by the author.

The primary sources of data are articles in academic journals and books written by academic professionals. Some articles appear in trade and popular journals as well as newspapers. Much of the data about military professionalism comes from within the armed services, from members of professional continuing education schools, retired members involved in academia, or members active in higher education programs.

### **Thesis Structure**

This first chapter spells out the research question, investigative questions, and background necessary to understand the problem. The second chapter outlines the methodological approach employed to answer the above questions and describes the key

characteristics that will be evaluated. Chapter III provides the baseline definitions for “vocation,” “occupation,” “calling,” and “profession.” Defining these terms provides the foundation for comparing the military to established professions within society. Chapters IV and V discuss the parallels between the military and established professions in the areas of knowledge and orientation. These characteristics highlight the critical differences between vocations, occupations, callings, and professions, as discussed in Chapters II-III. Chapter VI provides the findings and recommendations of the study.

## II. Research Methodology

### Framework

The present research consists of three basic steps: understanding the problem, identifying key characteristics for evaluation, and applying these characteristics to the military. Operational definitions are presented with critical characteristics identified for "vocation," "occupation," "calling," and "profession." These four terms are used extensively throughout this thesis. Two broad concepts, "knowledge" and "orientation," are defined as the critical differentiators between professions, callings, and occupations. These concepts establish the foundation for a comparison of the military and the professions and identify a set of characteristics specific to the professional military context. *Webster's Second Edition Unabridged* is the source for dictionary definitions in an attempt to increase the consistency of literature evaluation as a significant portion of the research reviewed referenced this edition as a starting point.

**Content Analysis.** The first step in this research is the background work necessary to adequately understand the issues. Several notable military writers (Wakin, Huntington, Moskos, and others) as well as scholars of traditional concepts or professions (Barber, Cogan, Abbott, Moore, Hinkle, Wold, and others) have addressed the issues of military professionalism. Additional readings on emerging or marginal professions fill out the source literature (Armstrong, Christensen, Freeman, Sheer, Laski, and others).



This initial literature familiarization led to the development of a simple framework for filtering the literature. The framework provides a focus for analyzing the content of available literature quickly and effectively. Each article is scanned for:

1. A clear definition of the term “profession” consisting of a list of applicable characteristics or a small paragraph describing critical characteristics.
2. Discussions of characteristics that imply a definition of professionalism. The author may not explicitly state that the characteristics define the term “profession,” but the context of the article or section is identifiable as such.
3. Discussions of or parallels drawn to the military context. These are usually explicitly identified in works which defended the military as a profession. Occasionally an author identifies the military as a profession when defense of the military is not the primary goal of the article.

Definitions of the terms “vocation,” “occupation,” “calling,” and “profession” are developed through the literature review. Each type of work is differentiated from the others by key factors or characteristics.

### **Defining the Key Characteristics**

**Community.** Vocations where members work closely together, have a common work-related language or common skills, and share ideals and abilities often form a community relationship. This phenomenon is frequently exhibited by the professions (Goode, 1957:194) and provides a mechanism for organizing and governing the vocation. In the professions, characteristics such as self-regulation, enforcement of ethical codes, control over academic entry training, and the setting of standards for continuing

professional education are often under the purview of voluntary professional associations (Goode 1957:195; Vaughan, undated:6). Without community, the professions would find these unifying characteristics difficult to implement.

While the characteristic of community is important to the establishment and control of a profession, it is not exclusive to a profession. Indeed, most callings form a community, and the corporate philosophy of buy-in and loyalty to the business entity are examples of community within the occupations. Therefore, community identity may be a necessary but not sufficient condition to be considered a profession.

Professional groups produce the next generation of professionals through educating new members. This socialization process passes on the group's ethical values, professional norms, theoretical knowledge, and practical skills (Goode, 1957:194).

**Societal Sanction.** Several characteristics associated with the learned professions require that the parent society acknowledge and accept the vocation as capable and responsible enough to gain such privileges. The notion of societal sanction focuses on the results of professional acceptance rather than on the characteristics necessary to gain such acceptance. Characteristics of professions such as monopoly power in a particular area of learning (Hughes, 1963:656; Wilensky, 1964:138; Downes, 1985:148) and self-regulation (Barber, 1963:672; Grace, 1990:28-9) will be made available to the profession only when the society condones the activities and behaviors of the profession and the professionals (Hughes, 1963:656; Goode, 1961:308).

The military does have a particular type of sanction that deserves examination, however. The state sanctions the military for its purposes, and applies the military to resolve the state's problems. Relevant aspects of sanction are explored in Chapters IV-V.

**Orientation.** The “orientation” of a vocation provides information about the motivation of the members and the purpose of the vocation as a whole. Vocations focused on serving the marketplace are satisfying needs within society, but are motivated by personal and corporate advancement. Occupations are characterized by self-interest (Moskos, 1977:3) where callings and professions are characterized by a service orientation. The service orientation focuses the members of the calling or profession to provide a vital need of society “transcending individual self-interest” (2).

The orientation of a vocation can be self-interest or service to the client or community. Operating altruistically to serve a vital concern of society where profit is not the primary motivator separates occupations from callings and professions (Moskos, 1977:2; Cogan, 1953:49; Downes, 1985:148; Goode, 1957:196). Often, those participating in service oriented vocations are required to give of themselves (sacrifice) to effectively perform as a member of the calling or profession (Moskos, 1977:2).

As the orientation of a particular vocation has the ability to discriminate between occupation and calling or profession, this characteristic is explored in greater detail in relation to the military in Chapter V.

**Knowledge.** Each vocation has a base of knowledge that is required for a practitioner to successfully complete tasks within that vocation. Professions, however, exhibit a special level of knowledge grounded in theoretical study of a particular area of science (Barber, 1963:672; Cogan, 1953:48-9; Wilensky, 1964:138; Downes, 1985:147). The presence of special knowledge separates professions from callings.

## The Model

The combination of orientation and knowledge within a vocation forms the basis for a model describing the relationships between occupations, callings, and professions (Figure 1). In the model used for this thesis, vocations are the initial point for all work and encompass the entire model. Occupations are the lowest form of vocations, and form the initial level of the model. Occupations are identified by their orientation or focus on survival of business entities through sustained profits (self-interest). Traditional occupations constitute the commercial marketplace. Callings and professions are differentiated from occupations by their orientation toward service. Professions are the highest form of vocation, unique from callings by the extent and character of their special knowledge (Moskos, 1977:3).

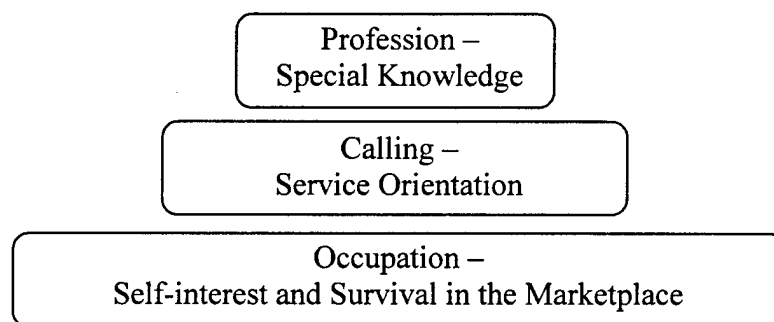


Figure 1. Social Hierarchy Model of the Vocations

## Evaluating the Military

This study evaluates each key factor in the context of the learned professions and the military to identify parallels and disconnects. Parallels are drawn to identify characteristics important to the military context. Disconnects identify special situations within the military environment that preclude using traditional professional

characteristics, or areas where the military has not attained the status of a profession. In the first case, the disconnect highlights special circumstances in the military that may lead to additional research. The second case identifies shortfalls in the military's ability to reach the status of profession. Where disconnects exist, this research addresses the disconnect either by not considering a particular characteristic as applicable to the military or by suggesting that topic as an area of focus for additional military study.

**Compiling the Military Characteristics.** The final step in the process is to compile a list of characteristics that represent the military professional environment. The impact of each characteristic is evaluated in the military context, and areas for future research are recommended.

### **Assumptions**

In discussing the nature of military professionalism, I have assumed the following:

1. There are characteristics common to all professions, although the characteristics of profession may be dynamic and evolving.
2. These characteristics are reflected in the academic and popular literature.
3. The learned professions provide a representative sample of professions in general.

As seen throughout available literature, the learned professions of medicine, law and theology provide the basis for establishing the critical characteristics of professions in general. Using the three learned professions provides for a significant body of research into professional characteristics of relatively stable fields. To reduce the

potential for bias, additional literature addressing new professions and vocations seeking professional status is included in the analysis.

The assumption that professions are defined by a set of common characteristics is important because it focuses the initial investigation towards identifying these inherent characteristics. Additionally, assuming that the nature of professions is dynamic (i.e., it can change over time) focused the study on the learned professions. Using these learned professions reduces the potential bias caused by the dynamic nature of professions because of the relatively stable nature of the learned professions in the centuries leading up to the twentieth century.

The final assumption is that studying the evident nature of established professions reveals those characteristics deemed important by the parent society. Society at large defines the characteristics necessary for entry into the realm of professions. In a pragmatic way, societal acceptance of a vocation as a profession is the ultimate definition of "profession."

### III. Definitions—Vocation, Occupation, Calling, Profession

#### The Need for a Definition

A concept or model should also communicate something meaningful. If too many people disagree over the meaning of a concept, its utility in communication is diminished. (Dye, 1998:37)

A definition is a model or combination of constructs that adequately explains a concept within a certain context. Definitions are central to the notion of communication. If there is no common base of definitions, there can be no meaningful oral or written communication. A prerequisite for discussing a normative professional model for the military is defining the critical terms. Four critical terms are used extensively in this research, and are presented here to aid the reader. The dictionary definitions for these terms are ambiguous, so clarifying definitions are presented.

The objective of this chapter is to give clear definitions that will aid in the understanding of the following chapters. There is debate within the academic community about the degree to which these terms can be defined. This chapter does not attempt to provide a definitive definition for each term. The definitions used in this research are grounded in academic literature, but as will become more obvious in the remainder of this research, no one absolute definition is available for any of these terms. Future chapters refine the definitions given here when appropriate.

**Vocation.** *Webster's* defines vocation as a calling or summons to "a particular state, business, or profession. Regular or appropriate employment; calling; occupation; profession." This definition combines the terms in question, or implies that these terms

mean substantially the same thing. In explaining the definition, however, *Webster's* notes that "vocation denotes one's regular calling or profession." Presented in this way, callings and professions become subsets of vocation. The present research uses this notion as the basis for the definition of "vocation."

*Webster's* notes that vocation is "the work in which a person is regularly employed." In this research, "vocation" has no connection with the social status or value of the work performed. If a person is doing any regular activity that serves as the primary means of supporting that individual, the work performed is a vocation. It is important to note that the three other terms presented here are all subcategories of "vocation," and as such, when generic situations are discussed, the term "vocation" is used.

**Occupation.** *Webster's* characterizes occupation as "the principal business of one's life; vocation; business; handicraft; trade." Occupation in this research focuses on the "business" aspect of *Webster's* definition. "Occupation" is used to signify a vocation that is "legitimated in terms of the marketplace" (Moskos, 1977:3). The marketplace orientation implies that individuals performing an occupation are primarily interested in "prevailing monetary rewards for equivalent competencies" (3). This self-interest is the basis for *caveat emptor*, or let the buyer beware, as both the buyer and seller are acting in their own best interests.

Occupations are not characterized by a particular knowledge requirement. The only limitation set on occupational knowledge is that it does not infringe on professional knowledge as discussed later.

Motivation of individuals operating within the occupational framework is the critical identifying element. The reason occupations focus on customer demand is to



increase the occupation's ability to survive in the marketplace. The bottom line motivation for the occupation is survival, or self preservation. This is not to say that professions or callings cannot make a profit or be motivated to survive, but rather only that the occupation has profit making and/or occupational survival as the primary goal.

**Calling.** As described by *Webster's*, a calling is "a divine summons, or prompting to a particular act or duty. One's usual occupation; vocation; business; trade." For this research, the distinction between calling and occupation is made clearer by focusing on specific elements of each definition that differentiate the terms. Moskos defines calling as "legitimated in terms of institutional values, i.e., a purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good" (1977:2).

A calling usually enjoys high esteem from the larger community because it is associated with notions of self-sacrifice and complete dedication to one's role. Although a calling does not obtain remuneration comparable to what one might expect in the economy of the marketplace, this is often compensated for by an array of social benefits associated with an institutional format. Members of a calling generally regard themselves as being different or apart from the broader society and are so regarded by others. (Moskos, 1977:2)

As defined in this research, "calling" and "occupation" do not overlap. The factors of motivation and a service orientation provide the primary means of differentiating calling from occupation. These factors are explored in later chapters.

**Profession.** *Webster's* defines profession as:

The occupation, if not purely commercial, mechanical, agricultural, or the like, to which one devotes oneself; a calling in which one professes to have acquired some special knowledge used by way either of instructing, guiding, or advising others or of serving them in some art.

The definition calls out the key characteristic distinguishing a profession from a calling—"special knowledge." Professions are callings that require specialized

knowledge gained through long, intensive academic study. Moskos characterizes professions as “legitimated in terms of specialized expertise” (1977:3).

“There are a few professions universally admitted to be such—law, medicine and preaching” (Flexner, 1915:902). *Webster’s* identifies the “three professions, or learned professions” as “theology, law and medicine.” This research uses these three professions as the basis for study.

Professions are defined by knowledge (special knowledge acquired through intensive training that is not readily available to those outside the profession) and orientation (focused on vital concerns of people).

### **Societal Sanction**

The strata presented here reflect particular social status. In general, vocations cover the entire model. Occupations are the first identified part of the model, and are accepted by society as a part of civilized life. They focus on the business of society, and as previously noted, are centered on the marketplace. Callings are a step higher on the social status ladder, and represent those vocations that have at their core a motivation other than profit. At the pinnacle of the social status ladder stand the professions. Professions represent vocations that serve the “vital practical affairs of man” (Cogan, 1953:49). There is a significant debate about the structure of the pyramid just described. It is unclear if professions must be callings with a monopoly on a particular branch of knowledge relevant to the vital concerns of man. Individuals and organizations that claim professional status based strictly on licensure or certification appear to separate the motivation aspect of professionalism from the aspect of vital or special knowledge (35).

This issue is centered on the ethical nature of professions, and is briefly discussed in later chapters.

As stated earlier, the terms presented here overlap. One consequence of the resulting ambiguity is that occupations and callings that have allocated to themselves the designation “profession”—whether or not they are deemed worthy by others—abound in today’s society. Commonly, vocations that have gained societal approval as “professions” hold a special status in society. They are typically granted privileges not available to most of society. Privileges such as self-regulation and control over entry of new practitioners are pointed to by researchers as characteristics of “professions.” However, these privileges are not evident in every “profession” accepted by society.

Those occupations and callings that have designated themselves “professions” may not be granted these societal privileges. The true measure of professional status is acceptance by the parent society of such status. Society controls the granting of professional status and may use different criteria for granting such status to different occupations as societal priorities change over time. Because of this phenomenon, an absolute non-time dependent definition of “profession” is difficult to quantify. However, the vocations that have traditionally been granted such professional status do have some common characteristics and are usually granted similar privileges. The study of these common characteristics and privileges provides insight into the society and how that society values the work performed by “professional” vocations.

#### IV. Knowledge

We are accustomed to speak of the learned professions. What is the significance of the word learned in this connection? Does it imply that there are unlearned as well as learned professions? I suspect not, for the intellectual character of professional activity involves the working up of ideas into practise, involves the derivation of raw materials from one realm or another of the learned world. (Flexner, 1915:903)

The aspect of special knowledge separates the professions from all other vocational groups. All vocations require knowledge in some form. Professions are differentiated on the basis of their knowledge because of the unique characteristics of a professional body of knowledge (Barber, 1963:672).

The knowledge of professionals is theoretical in nature and requires the regular use of judgement on the part of the practitioner (Beadles & Scott, 1995:290; Flexner, 1915:902). Practical application to the improvement of the human condition is the goal of professional knowledge and practice (Cogan, 1953:48). The base of knowledge regularly used by the practitioner is limited in scope, and is acquired through long and intensive study combined with practical experience (Wilensky, 1964:138,141; Hughes, 1963:656). The knowledge is not readily available to persons outside the profession (Goode, 1957:196; Barber, 1963:674). Finally, the practitioner has a responsibility to society whenever he or she applies the knowledge of the profession to the problem of a client (Goode, 1957:196; Cogan, 1953:49).

The following sections examine the special knowledge of the military. The goal of this discussion is to determine what characteristics of professional special knowledge are applicable to the military setting.

## **The Nature of Professional Military Knowledge**

Occupations striving for professional status and requisite authority “must find a technical basis for it, assert an exclusive jurisdiction, link both skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy” (Wilensky, 1964:138). These four elements form the outline for examining the military in relation to the professions.

There is almost universal agreement that the nature of professional knowledge is “based on systematic knowledge or doctrine” (138). One early characteristic of professional status and behavior “as the phrase ‘the learned professions’ vividly signifies, [is] a high degree of generalized and systematic knowledge” (Barber, 1963:672). Cogan notes that “in nearly every source consulted, there is an explicit mention of an intellectual and scientific basis of profession” (1953:40), and describes the nature of professional knowledge as “an understanding of the theoretical structure of some department of learning or science” (48-9).

“A profession is legitimated in terms of specialized expertise” (Moskos, 1977:3). The military has been regarded by many scholars and most military officers to be a profession. Huntington describes the special knowledge of the military as “the management of violence” (1957:11), and includes in his definition the mechanics of preparing and training a fighting force, the essential planning operations necessary to employ the force, and the command of that force in combat and in daily operations (11).

Hackett, a longtime member of the military, takes a slightly different focus in discussing the knowledge base of the military. “The function of the profession of arms is the ordered application of force in the resolution of social problems” (Hackett, 1962:2).

Hackett also acknowledges the presence of an unlimited liability clause in the military contract that presents circumstances to the military officer unlike those encountered by almost any other vocation. These factors, the application of force to resolve social problems with unlimited liability on the part of the military, are the foundation for the knowledge base of military officers.

“Unlike many other professions, it is comparatively difficult to define accurately the military profession’s sphere of competence and specific task or tasks” (Downes, 1985:155). Downes sees the military sphere of competence encompassing four broad areas that surprisingly do not include the waging of war. These are:

1. Rescuing people
2. Overseeing the withdrawal of hostile forces from occupied territory
3. Military advisor and trainer for the forces of other nations
4. Aid to civil community and authority (155-6)

Downes adds that the significance of the possibility of conventional war escalating into a nuclear conflict “ensures that the military profession retains as an important, but not sole, function, the practice of preparing for, and engaging in, the act of armed combat” (156). In this argument, Downes places the knowledge associated with armed conflict somewhere other than the peak of military professional knowledge, contrary to Huntington, Hackett, Grace, and others. It may be important to note that when broadly characterizing the efforts of professions, many scholars have use a phrase similar to the following: “the result of professional service is to promote the health and welfare of the people whom they serve” (Vaughan, undated:5). Downes is the first

author I have found to include the term "security" (Downes, 1985:154) in the phrase, thus showing his pre-occupation with the military.

Apart from Downes, the expertise associated with combat is a recurring central theme in the definition of military professionalism. Military professionals "have studied, continue to study, and are adept at the business of warfare" (Shiner, 1983:1-32). The professional status of the military member "rests on a special knowledge whose wellsprings are skills at war" (Sarkesian, 1983:1-25). Grace takes a slightly different view of military professionalism and defines the concept as "the exercise of command" (1990:29). Defined in this way, military professionalism rests on the specialized knowledge gained in collecting information for and making command decisions. This includes decision making in the field of combat as well as during peacetime, and also includes both direct supervisory positions as well as the staff positions, as they collect, analyze, and pass much of the necessary command decision information to the actual commander. "By virtue of his qualifications to command armed forces in combat, the military officer is uniquely competent to advise decision makers concerning the capabilities and limitations of the various forms of military force" (29).

As the previous discussion illustrates, there is ambiguity surrounding the role of knowledge in the military environment. More research in this area is necessary before all members of the professional military officer corps can share the same basis of special knowledge. The previous examples do contain similarities, most of which can be included in the "exercise of command" concept. The term "command," however, is also ambiguous, and deserves additional comment.

*Webster's* defines command as the "exercise of authority... To direct authoritatively; to bid; order; charge; enjoin" (536-7). The concept of command, or directive leadership, is not unique to the military setting. The military officer is tasked with one particular burden that does make the exercise of command unique to the military setting; the command of forces with unlimited liability. Every member of the combat forces falls under the unlimited liability clause, which simply means that it may become necessary to put themselves or others in situations where the death of some members of the force is inevitable. The clause in its most basic form is "to enable men to go forward under fire in the face of 'unlimited liability'" (Grace, 1990:31). The potential for unlimited liability in service to the state transforms the concept of exercise of command into one uniquely belonging to the military professional.

Mainly due to the potential consequences of military action, possession of the "special knowledge" requires of the military officer judgement, an understanding of the specific limits of the knowledge, and a responsibility to the greater community when exercising the aspects of military knowledge. These characteristics are similar in nature to those regarded as necessary in the professional communities at large.

**Regular Use of Judgement.** "The real character of the activity is the thinking process; a free, resourceful and unhampered intelligence applied to problems and seeking to understand and master them—this is in the first instance characteristic of a profession" (Flexner, 1915:902). The use of professional knowledge is limited and fits specific patterns. It must be used with judgement and reason on the part of the professional. Routine or memorized actions based on theoretical precepts do not fit the professional model. "While ultimately all labor is rooted in theory, the civil engineer who designs a



bridge may know some laws of physics, the workers who build the bridge do not” (Wilensky, 1964:139). The idea of regularly exercising judgement in the carrying out of professional activities dictates that the professional knows and understands the theoretical framework of the knowledge.

Doctors don’t make medical equipment; they heal people. Lawyers resolve disputes. Ministers provide spiritual guidance. Teachers instill learning. These services can be provided only as a result of careful forethought and some intellectual reflection on the part of the professionals. (Vaughan, undated:5)

United States case law provides further evidence of the judgement criterion.

Beadles and Scott evaluated the effects of the National Labor Relations Board’s (NLRB) definition of “profession” on the medical community and found that “if the work can be considered as routinized or standardized it is not indicative of professional standing” (1995:290). The NLRB definition considers “the consistent exercise of discretion and judgement” (288) to be a hallmark of professional activity. Another distinction made by Beadles and Scott is that the NLRB definition places the nature of the work above the individual’s qualifications as the primary determinant of professional status (295). “Possessing a doctorate in chemistry is no indication of professional status if the individual is a maintenance worker” (294). Additional case law examples show that legal claims of professional status must be accompanied by “(1) the practical application of scientific study in the pursuit of livelihood, [and] (2) the predominance of intellectual quality over manual skill” (Cogan, 1953:37).

Grace discusses the issue of judgement in terms of the complexity of military problems and cites Alain C. Enthoven as supporting evidence:

The problem of choosing strategies and weapon systems is a unique problem requiring a method of its own. It is obviously not Physics or Engineering or

Mathematics or Psychology or Diplomacy or Economics, nor is it entirely a problem in military operations though it involves elements of all of the above. Because it involves a synthesis of the above-mentioned disciplines and others, it requires the cooperation of experts in all of the professions and many others. (Grace, 1990:30)

The discussion by Enthoven shows the necessity of using judgement in the acquisition of weapon systems for military use. The same levels of judgement are necessary when employing today's complex weapon systems. Enthoven's discussion brings to light another issue: that the military may consist of practitioners from many different professions that come together for the express purpose of serving the state. Flexner provides a framework for this phenomenon in his discussions of the status of social work early this century. He proposes that social workers mediate the interface between society and the professions by studying the cases at hand and selecting the appropriate measures for each case (e.g., if the patient requires medical help, the social worker refers the client to a doctor). "The very variety of situations he encounters compels him to be not a professional agent so much as the mediator invoking this or that professional agency" (1915:907).

The military is a curious beast when viewed through this lens. There are specialties within the military that could easily be categorized as Flexner did social work, i.e., facilitators or mediators between society (the state as a client) and the professions or between members of the military (internal clients) and the professions. There are others in the military who are obviously members of a profession apart from the military, such as doctors and lawyers. Finally, there are those in the military whose sole job is the "exercise of command," the orderly application of military force in situations of unlimited liability. Understanding the makeup of the military officer corps, the issue of

special knowledge common to all practitioners is again suspect. It is difficult to identify a core body of theoretical professional knowledge common to all military officers that is important to the performance of their duties within the military community.

It is also clear that the society in which we live does not recognize the same distinctions between officer categories as the military community does. Those solely schooled in the arts of war (fighter pilots, special operations personnel, security forces, and potentially several others) and those who have more “occupational” jobs within the military (members that possess skills that could be easily transferred to civilian occupational organizations such as acquisition specialties, logistics managers, and finance officers) are all viewed in society as military members.

The military represents a collection of specialties working together for a common goal. Some of these specialties are members of long-established professions, such as doctors and lawyers. Others represent the core of the military profession. In this sense, the military may be better represented as a collection of professions. If viewed in this manner, it is possible that there exists a smaller but still identifiable body of knowledge and expertise associated with the collection of professions known as the military. Each individual profession within the military would also maintain contact with the primary body of knowledge generated by that particular profession.

The question of whether the military is a profession, a collection of professions, or a calling is not central to this thesis. Regardless of which of those three categories the military best fits in, it must still interact with the parent society. Societal interaction with the military (the professional-client relationship) is a central theme in discussing the orientation of the professions. Orientation is addressed in Chapter V.

**Theoretically Based Action.** The actions of the professional are based on a theoretical framework of professional knowledge. “Even when manual, the action—it is assumed or claimed—is determined by esoteric knowledge systematically formulated and applied to problems of a client” (Hughes, 1963:655). Professions have “esoteric but useful knowledge and skills” which are used “to perceive the needs of individual or collective clients that are relevant to his competence and to attend to those needs by competent performance” (Moore, 1970:6).

As noted before, the body of professional military knowledge is hard to identify specifically. Grace states that the military possesses the capability and basic knowledge that could be transformed into a “proper body of professional knowledge, but this goal has not been realized because we have been busying ourselves in civilian academia” (1990:31). His basic point is that if we are to be perceived as a profession, with the requisite knowledge and expertise, then we need to refocus our study towards the body of military knowledge that is ours to shape and mold.

Part of the refining of theoretical knowledge is the creation of practical applications. “The practical skills used by members of the profession in the performance of their professional task [are] based upon, and supported by, a set of theoretical precepts” (Downes, 1985:148). The application of theoretical learning to practical problems results in the development of usable skills and knowledge. Professions are “definitely practical. No profession can be merely academic and theoretic” (Flexner, 1915:903). Referring back to the discussion on special knowledge, it will be difficult for the military community to provide access to a consistent set of tools or practical skills without first identifying and adopting a common basis of theoretical knowledge.

**The Limited Scope of Professional Knowledge.** “We observe that professions need to be limited and definite in scope, in order that practitioners may themselves act” (Flexner, 1915:908). Parsons states that the professional man “often exercises authority over people who are, or are reputed to be his superiors in social status, in intellectual attainments or in moral character. This is possible because the area of professional authority is limited to a particular technically defined sphere” (1949:188).

The traditional military scope has changed and evolved throughout the years. In America’s case, the first national militia was formed to repel the British in the Revolutionary War. Later, the Army was used to secure the frontier and protect settlers from Indians. Today, the mission of the armed forces includes the traditional waging of war in the defense of the nation as well as more recent concepts such as international peacekeeping operations and humanitarian aid. As the scope of military operations expands, the ability of military members to master the knowledge and skills necessary for successful implementation of those operations declines. Another factor is the expansion of the basic knowledge required by military professionals. As operations become more varied and the scope and focus of those operations becomes more diverse, the underlying knowledge base also diversifies.

The varied missions taken on by the military forces require different skills. However, for the professional officer corps, the concept of “exercise of command” may be sufficiently broad to cover these newer military operations other than war (MOOTW). Whether the military officer is trained and equipped to handle these situations is a separate question, and is beyond the scope of this investigation. The tools and procedures

by which the military member is trained, however, are important to understanding military professionalism.

**Education and Training to Impart Professional Knowledge.** “An important next step in professionalism is the possession of esoteric but useful knowledge and skills, based on specialized training or *education* of exceptional duration and perhaps of exceptional difficulty” (Moore, 1970:6). The previous discussion of the scope, nature, and limitations of professional knowledge immediately brings to question the methods of acquiring that knowledge. Understanding theoretical concepts and acquiring practical skills based on those concepts requires some type of training and education system.

Wilensky characterized the nature of professional knowledge as “technical,” and concluded that it was essential for members entering the profession to have a substantial knowledge base prior to qualification; “there is no notion that it can all be learned on the job” (1964:138). The need for this pre-entry knowledge base requires “extensive training” to master the profession’s special or abstract skills (Abbott, 1988:7). Most professionals are “formally accredited after long, intensive, academic training” (Moskos, 1977:3). Academic and apprenticeship training under masters of the profession serves to initiate new members into the ranks of the profession (Hughes, 1963:656). This process of training and educating new recruits includes the passing of professional norms and behavioral standards to the new members. “Though [the profession] does not produce the next generation biologically, it does so socially through its control over the selection of professional trainees, and through its training processes it sends these recruits through an adult socialization process” (Goode, 1957:194).

Military specialty training is considered to be excellent, especially within the technical specialties of the Air Force. The professional training of its officers, however, lacks the coherent strategy apparent in its technical schools. There is little evidence to show that within the Air Force, there is a set of professional characteristics or standards required of each and every officer, regardless of specialty, except those pertaining to societal trust and discipline. Two possible complications of this situation are the move towards careerism (discussed in Chapter V) and the stovepiping of technical specialties.

With stovepiping, individuals can become so engrossed in the technical requirements of the job that they lose sight of the overarching professional aspects, becoming an expert in one specific technical niche rather than a professional officer able to exercise command. Policies within the service that promote this behavior may result in an added emphasis on careerism, inter-specialty animosity, and a lack of officers qualified to make decisions based on the overall, or big, picture. The concept of special knowledge common to all practitioners forms the basis for those practitioners to understand problems and make decisions that impact the entire profession or in some cases, the entire society.

There are limitations on training requirements for entrants to the profession. First, they are limited by the scope of knowledge held by the profession. Secondly, increases in prerequisite, apprenticeship and internship requirements are “held in check by the fact that many of the would-be professions cannot offer enough future income and prestige to get people early and keep them long in school” (Hughes, 1963:662).

An exception to the above rule may be a calling. The priesthood does not promote itself by the lure of future income (unless one considers the riches of eternal

life), but rather focuses on the element of service as the motivating factor. The length of time in school for those dedicating their lives to God, as in the priesthood, is of little consequence and will most likely have little impact on a “called” person’s decision. If one views the military as a calling (dedicated to serving the needs of the state in a military capacity), then monetary or time considerations may play a relatively small role in the decision to join.

The discussions of education and training of professional entrants imply another vital characteristic of professional knowledge—that the fundamental knowledge and skills are educationally communicable. The learned professions possess “a technique capable of communication through an orderly and highly specialized educational discipline” (Flexner, 1915:903). Barber claims that most true professions have strong links to university schools to provide the forum for this pre-job training. The primary function of university professional schools is transferring the general and systematic knowledge of the profession to the students. In the learned professions, there are also periods of internship or apprenticeship where the recruits work in the field with recognized members of the profession. Finally, the learning process of a professional does not end at some arbitrary point, but includes post-professional, or continuing, education (Barber, 1963:674).

**Exclusive Jurisdiction of Professional Knowledge.** The “professional body of knowledge and practical skills are the common possession of the profession and not readily available to the layman” (Downes, 1985:148). Professional knowledge is the basis for expertise within the profession, and the foundation upon which the profession is built. Professions work to create and enhance this knowledge base, and pass it on to the



next generation of professionals. To maintain control, the professions exert exclusive jurisdiction over this special knowledge. “[T]he profession must be the final arbiter in any dispute about what is or is not valid knowledge” (Goode, 1961:308).

Within the military arena, the concept of monopoly, or exclusive jurisdiction, is more limited than in many of the professions. The exclusivity of the military lies in its ability to operate in the arena of war with state sanction which creates a situation where the monopoly power is not based on knowledge but rather on legal authorization. There are some aspects of knowledge (as previously discussed) that are unique to the military situation such as the exercise of command under unlimited liability, but these are a result of the state’s sanction, not a primary reason for the sanction. In this aspect, the military operates much closer to the “calling” model with authority granted to act in certain professional ways, such as societal sanction (or monopoly).

**Responsibility.** Professions apply their knowledge and skills “to the vital affairs of man” (Cogan, 1953:48). Downes adds clarification to professional responsibility by stating “that the status of profession should only be accorded to those occupations which work unreservedly for the social good in areas which are essential to the health, security and welfare of all members of society” (1985:154).

The basis of the professional responsibility is the possession of special knowledge not typically available to the layperson. In the military setting, this responsibility is increased by two additional factors: 1) the unlimited liability clause and 2) the direct state sanction of the military service. Society demands the services provided by the professional but society also requires that the professionals act with responsibility toward society. In the case of the military, “when we consider that the whole ‘killing business’ is

hardly socially acceptable, it is plain that only by adherence to a strict code of ethics can the military profession expect any moral support from the society at large" (Grace, 1990:31). The notion of a service orientation centered on the needs of the greater society is the focus of the next chapter.

## **V. Orientation**

### **Impacts of Professional Status**

Professions in society “enjoy more prestige” (Goode, 1957:195) than most occupations within society. By controlling the entry and training of practitioners, professions gain monopoly power over certain skills, and “the professional communities obtain incomes higher than those of other occupations” (195). One impact of professions’ monopoly control over knowledge areas is a greater dependence on the profession within society. As professionals are relied upon more heavily, they come into positions of power within society. Professionals “hold a disproportionate share of seats in state and national legislative houses, on boards of directors, on advisory and technical commissions, and so on” (1957:195). These privileges are not given freely by the society, but demand of the professional certain concessions. The granting of professional status rests on “evaluations made by the larger society, for the professional community could not grant these advantages to itself” (196).

In a similar manner, the military has been granted monopoly power within its own realm. The price of holding monopoly power in society is greater societal control in other areas. Within the military, this control is evident in the budget process and the civilian leadership structure. However, the military status as a monopoly is not accompanied by the same level of “professional perks” as the learned professions. A major factor in this case is the professional-client relationship.

In the case of the learned professions, most relationships are one-on-one in which a single provider ministers to the needs of a single client. Small group or classroom situations also occur where a small number of professionals tend to the needs of a small or slightly larger group of clients. For the military, there is only one client, but that client is not an individual. The military client is the collection of all individuals in that particular society—the state. As such, the nature of the relationship between professional and client exhibits different characteristics than that within more traditional professions. Despite these differences, the overall concept of orientation to service remains constant between the military and the learned professions.

This chapter explores the essential characteristics of the service orientation and why this orientation is important in the military setting. These evaluations illuminate additional areas of focus for military officers in their quest to become more professional.

### **The Importance of a Service Orientation**

As noted in Chapter IV, the professions in general and the military specifically hold monopoly power in the area of their special knowledge. In return for societal sanction of the profession's monopoly, "professions promise to use their expertise to benefit, not harm, society" (Armstrong, 1994). "Where such knowledge exists, orientation primarily to community rather than individual interest is an essential attribute of professional behavior" (Barber, 1963:672). In the case of the military, the community focus is essential because the state sanctions the military to use lethal force in resolution of the state's problems.

The professional-client relationship literature provides several key points in examining the importance of a service orientation. In examining the relationship of service oriented professionals and clients, "we may attend to three subsets of related norms: rules of *competence*, rules of conscientious *performance*, and rules of *loyalty* or *service*" (Moore, 1970:13).

**Rules of Competence.** Society expects competence from professionals. This expectation forces on the professions rigorous requirements for entry into the professional community. The professional training programs are rigorous enough to eliminate from consideration those not capable of performing to the standards of the profession "in a large, free and responsible way" (Flexner 1915:904) and to ensure that those who do make the grade are given the most benefit possible from the training. In this way, the training requirements attempt to ensure competent performance in professional work.

While training plays an important role, the primary reason society expects competence from professionals is the nature of professional work. Cogan states that professions serve "the vital practical affairs of man" (1953:49). In serving these interests, the knowledge held by the professions must have certain salient characteristics. First, it must be "evaluated by the larger society as crucial in both individual and societal matters" (Goode, 1957:196).

There seems to be a very vigorous insistence among many writers that professions are, to a significant extent altruistic. The implication underlying this insistence may be based on the conviction that professional services are vital to the very survival and integrity of man in a sophisticated and complex civilization. (Cogan, 1953:42)

A problem with societal expectations of competent performance comes in the tools available for measuring success. As the professionals hold a monopoly over the knowledge, it is extremely difficult if not impossible for members of society not in the profession to judge the quality of work performed.

Social control depends in part, obviously, upon substantive understanding of the behavior to be controlled. In the case of behavior characterized by a high degree of knowledge, the requisite understanding is available in full measure only to those who have themselves been trained in and apply that knowledge. It follows that some kind of self-control, by means of internalized codes of ethics and voluntary in-groups, is necessary. (Barber, 1963:673)

Hughes states that "the client is not a true judge of the value of the service he receives" (1963:656). Complicating this matter is the notion that even if the best remedy is applied, not all of man's social problems will disappear. Therefore, it is difficult to assess if one client's misfortune is due to lack of competence of the professional or simply the hopelessness of the situation. Therefore, the only persons qualified to make judgements about the competence of professionals are other professionals.

As a result, much of the external judging of the profession is focused on aspects of the community of professions not central to the profession's knowledge. The military is often judged on its ethics and intentions rather than on its technical competence. This is often true even when technical experts outside the military are capable of assessing the quality of the service provided. In the traditional professions, these judgements are often made on the basis of ethics because the clients have no other aspect of the service that they are capable of judging. The problem of assessing professional competence leads directly to a responsibility on the part of the professional for conscientious performance.

**Rules of Conscientious Performance.** In the business world, the term *caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware—is the understood standard. In the professional realm, however, the principle of conscientious performance necessitates a relationship based on “*credat emptor*” (Hughes, 1963:657), or let the buyer trust. The *credat emptor* relationship is necessary because of the nature of the service performed.

As noted previously, the professional has special knowledge based on long and intensive study. The buyer, lacking such training, does not have the professional’s basis of knowledge; he has no basis for judging the service performed. The provider-client relationship requires professionals base their decisions on the needs of the client and not on the self-interest of the professional:

Such [a service] orientation is not to be confused with individual “altruism.” Professionals seek their own gain as much as any occupational group, and professional associations fight to increase their privileges and advantages. Rather, the professional community must create a set of controls such that its members are more handsomely rewarded for conforming to its code of ethics than for failing to do so. The rules which it imposes are stricter than those the society embodies in its administrative regulations and statutes. The service orientation also means that the profession spends both time and money in seeking superior candidates and giving them better training, even though this increases competition in the field. Only to the extent that the society believes the profession is regulated by this collectivity orientation will it grant the profession much autonomy or freedom from lay supervision and control. (Goode, 1961:308)

In the military, there is a need for conscientious performance because the military’s area of expertise deals with the conduct of war. In exercising command in wartime situations, responsibility to the larger social community is essential, as the social community is the client.

The military differs greatly from traditional professions in the ability of outside individuals to assess the effectiveness of military operations. Traditional professions

rarely have outside individuals capable of truly assessing the quality of service provided by the professional to the client. Most practitioners are initiated into the profession through a long and specialized training program as discussed in Chapter IV. Once these practitioners are in the profession, they typically make the profession their lifelong career (Goode, 1957:194; Moskos, 1977:3; Hughes, 1964:657). The opportunity for military members to dedicate their entire working lives to the military profession is limited (Moskos, 1977:3).

Many if not most military officers involve themselves in second careers after completion of their military service (another significant difference from the professions, mandatory retirement ages are imposed on military professionals). These retired or former officers working outside the profession create a situation where there are a significant number of people capable and qualified to assess the quality of service provided by the military. In traditional professions, this situation would be unusual. Having a qualified group of people outside the military places an even greater responsibility on those in the profession to act in a conscientious manner. Failing to act responsibly will almost surely draw censure from the informed outsiders, which could reduce the military's ability to perform effectively.

Even though people within society are capable of judging the performance of the military, the focus of military members should be on conscientious performance. The military represents a financial investment of the part of society and has been recognized as requiring some level of professional privilege (state sponsored monopoly) to be effective. The return on society's investment is expected to be societal security, an



essential service to society, and the military professional is obligated to act in a conscientious manner.

**Rules of Loyalty or Service.** “Business [is] the vital center of individualism both in creed and in practice. The professions, by setting a pattern of more direct concern with the community interest, [seem] to represent quite a different principle” (Barber, 1963:670). The professions are becoming increasingly altruistic and “professional groups have more and more tended to view themselves as organs contrived for the achievement of social ends” (Flexner, 1915:904). This view leads the professionals in these organizations towards altruism in their relations to the community and society. The altruistic focus, characterized by Flexner as “professional spirit” (911), has become an “accepted mark of professional activity” (904).

In the military, many of the aspects of service to community are embodied in the notion of self-governing codes of ethics, both written and unwritten. The purpose of such codes or norms is “to maintain or improve the quality of service to the larger community and also to protect practicing professionals when, in the performance of duty, they are required to depart from socially acceptable conduct” (Grace, 1990:31). Since killing in the general sense is certainly not condoned within society, it is clear that “only by adherence to a strict code of ethics can the military profession expect any moral support from the society at large” (31).

The concept of service in the professions relies on a focus or motivation different than that present in the commercial world. Webster’s identification that the professions are “not purely commercial” provides a meaningful distinction from traditional businesses, where profit from operations is the primary purpose. This distinction implies

a service orientation, where service to the client is the primary purpose. This does not mean that a profit making fee-for-services operation cannot be a profession, but rather that the primary motivation for entering into or operating within the vocation is not profit. The motivation for the professional is the focus of the next section.

### **Professional Motivation**

There is a higher purpose in the professions that is not present in businesses “purely commercial, mechanical, agricultural, or the like.”

A profession is not a money getting business. It has no element of commercialism in it. True, the professional man seeks to live by what he earns, but his main purpose and desire is to be of service to those who seek his aid and to the community of which he is a necessary part. (Steiner v. Yelle, 1953:91)

Members of trades and occupations are “not bound by a vow to some principles higher and greater than themselves. They [earn] a living on the basis of profit alone” (Fleishman, 1996). In contrast, the true professional “recognizes an obligation to render services on other than exclusively economic considerations” (White, 1937:87). The distinction between service orientation and professional motivation is a key concept. Service orientation focuses on providing for others in a competent and conscientious way. Motivation for the service professional requires that the professional (or the profession) provide the service to improve the health and welfare of the parent society.

Cogan states that the professional’s skills “are applied to the vital practical affairs of man” (1953:49). In discussing motivation as a higher purpose, Cogan states that the “profession, serving the vital needs of man, considers its first ethical imperative to be altruistic service to the client” (49). The three learned professions of medicine, law, and theology “mediate man’s relations to God, man’s relations to man and state, and man’s

relations to his biological environment” (36). Serving as a mediator in such vital affairs requires a personal commitment to perform the service for the good of the client. In the commercial setting, where the rules of *caveat emptor* apply, professions could use their power in non-beneficial ways. As professions are sanctioned by society and work for the good of society, the motivation of the profession as a whole must be something other than *caveat emptor*. As Cogan claims, the motivation of the professional must be based on altruism.

According to *Webster's*, altruism is “regard for, and devotion to, the interests of others as an ethical principle.” Further, Webster’s characterizes altruistic as “unselfish.” Altruistic service in the professional realm is the unselfish devotion or service to the client. The profession oriented towards altruistic service elevates itself above the common. This altruism of the profession does not eliminate the individual professional’s advancement or the personal pursuit of satisfaction, but ensures that the profession as a whole creates an environment that supports the altruistic service orientation of its members.

The calling is the highest form of motivation. Those vocations typically identified as callings exhibit characteristics that position service above personal needs. Theology is most often associated with the idea of calling and illustrates the type of personal sacrifice those who are called are willing to endure.

Downes provides insight into the military’s position relative to the professions when he discusses the American military specifically. His analysis concludes that the American military “appears to demonstrate many of the features which have been recognized as associated with a profession in decline” (1985:163). The military

community is experiencing “encroachments of civilian bureaucrats, technocrats, strategists and scientists into areas of activity previously regarded as the preserve of the military profession” (163). The diminished scope of military activity and resulting loss of expertise within the military has caused the military to lose “distinctiveness as a professional group” (164).

Furthermore, the American society has devalued the professional service of the military. Segments of society have reevaluated the status of the military in light of the “recognition that members of the [military] profession have not espoused and do not adhere consistently to a higher code of moral and ethical conduct” (166). The military itself has de-emphasized elements of the military character that were originally put in place to facilitate community within the military (167). In doing so, the distinction between the military as a community and civilian occupations has blurred. “Such efforts have served to generate confusion and dissensus within the armed forces as to the normative implication of membership” (167).

Downes last argument concerns “spiralling deprofessionalisation”:

Should the American military profession fail to carry out its professional task in the future, it can anticipate further losses in terms of the respect and status which is accorded it by society. Without a basic level of societal approbation (not to be confused with popularity), the profession will continue to lose its distinctive identity, its monopoly of professional competence and sink possibly into a downward spiral of ever decreasing levels of professionalism. (167-8)

Moskos addresses the move toward deprofessionalization of the military in discussing the Gates Report (a 1970 report that initiated the All-Volunteer Military): “Instead of a military system anchored in the normative values of a calling—captured in words like “Duty,” “Honor,” “Country”—the Gates Commission explicitly argued that

primary reliance in recruiting an armed force should be on monetary inducements guided by the marketplace standards” (1977:4).

Unfortunately, there are certain trends observable within the officer corps today that are moving it away from this traditional ideal rather than toward it. Not only are officers acquiring advanced degrees in civilian academic disciplines, but they also appear to be accepting some of the civilian measures of *success* in their profession.... The opposite of professional idealism is careerism. How can we expect followers to have confidence in an example of self-serving pragmatism instead of selfless devotion to duty? The only known cure is self-discipline. (Grace, 1990:33-4)

The members in today's military have moved away from the attitudes associated with a calling and have adopted attitudes more in line with occupations. The next section examines some of the issues that are diminishing the nature of a service orientated calling within the military.

### **Obstacles to a Service Orientation**

**Careerism.** A large percentage of the skills necessary for military jobs are immediately transferable to the private sector. Combined with the limited lifelong career potential in the military, the level of loyalty to altruistic service to the state may be less than the loyalty exhibited in traditional professions. One response to the transferability of job skills by military members is a focus on careerism, or getting as much personally out of the military as possible without regard or with little regard to the impact on the military mission. The careerist focus puts personal advancement ahead of military mission accomplishment.

Another factor that impacts careerism is the tendency to identify oneself as a member of the subgroup rather than the top-group (i.e., “I’m a program manager rather than an Air Force Officer”). This tendency may diminish the level of personal loyalty

felt to the organization as a whole, and could create situations where loyalty to the individual sub-group is more important than loyalty to the service. Identification with one particular sub-group, whether it is a job specialty, a unit, or a particular commander, creates potential for sub-optimization within the service and increases the tension between professional service members. The "community of profession" (Goode, 1957:194) is diminished, and could result in lower standards or even total abandonment of professional norms and standards.

**The All-Volunteer Force.** Grace contends that military focus has shifted within the United States in the past 50 years, and military discipline has been de-emphasized. The additional emphasis on the benefits of a military career, such as education, training, and recreation has resulted in a different type of entrant into the military. No longer is service the primary motivation for entrance into the service, but rather the individual benefits one can accrue (1990:32). This attention to oneself created among military members could undermine the critical altruistic motivation necessary for effective service to the state. As noted above, the move toward personal advancement and away from a service calling also increases the tendency toward careerist attitudes.

"In contrast to the all-volunteer force, the selective service system was premised on the notion of citizenship obligation" (Moskos, 1977:4). The Gates Commission recommended the move to the all-volunteer force in 1970, and as noted above, recommended that the recruiting associated with the new force structure should rest primarily on the financial incentives of the marketplace (Moskos, 1977:4). The changes made as a result of the Gates Commission have altered the primary motivation of new entrants into the service from that of a calling to that of an occupation, and Moskos

contends that the military has moved from a calling to an occupational model of operation (4).

The occupational model used in a military setting generates conflicts of interest when the primary mission of the military organization is considered. If members enter the military under the assumptions of an occupational model without the personal obligations associated with the calling (self-sacrifice, unlimited liability, service before self), the military loses its ability to perform its primary task, defending the nation against armed attack or waging war. The move toward the occupational model within the military potentially has serious consequences that need further evaluation.

## **VI. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Answering the Research and Investigative Questions**

This thesis evaluates the military experience in relation to literature-based definitions of “profession,” “calling,” and “occupation.” The goal of this research is to provide insight into critical characteristics of professions that military members can strive for if they wish to become more professional in their activities. The following summarizes the answers to the investigative and research questions.

1. What established professions have traditionally determined the characteristics of professions?

The literature evaluated clearly shows that the learned professions of medicine, law, and theology have had the most impact in the development of the profession in the centuries prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2. What set of characteristics are essential in the chosen professions?

The two critical characteristics are special knowledge and orientation. These characteristics differentiate between occupations, callings, and professions. Special knowledge consists of a base of theoretical knowledge that 1) requires judgement in its use, 2) is limited in scope, 3) requires extensive training and education to acquire, and 4) is practical in an area of vital concern to man. Orientation can be self-interest or service to the client. In the case of professions, the service element of orientation is necessary due to the difficulty in assessing the quality of the service and the potential impacts of the service on the client. Elements of orientation are 1) expectations of competence, 2)



conscientious (or ethical) performance, 3) altruism, and 4) individual professional motivation.

3. How do the traditional characteristics fit within the military context?

The military has an inconsistently defined body of theoretical professional knowledge identified in literature. Without identification of a common body of knowledge, it is difficult to assess how such knowledge would be used. The orientation of the military is definitely service to the client (the state), but it appears that issues such as careerism and stovepiping may be moving the military away from a service orientation to an occupational orientation.

4. Which characteristics are transferable to or critical in the military context?

This research has highlighted the need for a service orientation in the military. Based on the ambiguity of military professional knowledge, it appears that the military operates more like a calling. As such, the orientation to the client is the critical factor. All four elements of orientation are transferable to the military setting. It appears, however, that altruism and motivation are areas that deserve the most attention in future research. Special knowledge may also be applicable to the military. Grace and others contend that the military has the capability to develop an appropriate body of professional military knowledge. Again, all four of the knowledge elements are applicable in the military setting.

The answers to the four investigative questions now allow me to answer the overall research question, "*What are the normative characteristics of 'profession' that military officers should be aware of?*" To be considered truly professional, the knowledge base applicable to the military context should be held and understood by all

professional military members. The development of such a base of knowledge would clearly move the military much closer to the professional model as described in this research. Currently, monopoly power typically gained by exclusive control of special knowledge is given to the military by way of state sanction.

The military focus on motivation and orientation of members appears to be inconsistent with the traditional professional examples. Even with a professional knowledge base, members that do not possess a service orientation would not be considered professionals, according to the traditional definition. As clearly pointed out in this research, the orientation of the professional is critical to the parent society because of the nature of the professions (exclusive knowledge in vital areas).

### **Summary**

The term "profession" does not have a consistently applied definition in society in general. Within the military, the ambiguity of the definition of profession places military members in situations where understanding their "professional" responsibilities is difficult. To address the ambiguity of the term "profession," this thesis has examined the characteristics of traditional professions to draw parallels to the military situation. These links between the traditional professions and the military should identify areas where military professionals can focus their studies and efforts to increase professionalism. Data were gathered from academic and popular literature for evaluation.

The data presented in Chapter II provide sufficient evidence to identify the factors of special knowledge of a profession and service orientation of professional members as critical to professional status. Using these two factors, definitions developed in Chapter

III identify a social hierarchy between occupations, callings, and professions where callings are identified above occupations because of their service orientation and professions are identified above callings due to their special knowledge.

### **Areas for Future Research**

**Ambiguity of Professional Knowledge.** Examining the special knowledge of the military reveals (as shown in Chapter IV) that the definitions of military professional knowledge are not consistent in available literature. Further, the development of a professional knowledge base in the military is not evident (partly due to the lack of a consistent definition of “profession”). The military has gained a measure of its professional status based upon state sanction of military action in the interest of the state. Based on the evaluation of military knowledge, it appears that the military may be more appropriately classified as either a collection of professions (which would adequately explain the differing definitions of “profession”) or a calling (service orientation as the critical aspect) with limited specific authority to act as a profession in certain aspects. The actual status of the military is not examined in this research—the two options presented here (the military as a collection of professions or a calling) are suggested as a potential avenue for future research.

In reference to the military as a collection of professions, I found no identifiable body of research could be located which discusses collections of professions or individual professionals operating simultaneously under two (or more) professional umbrellas (as would be the case if the military were considered a collection of professions with an overarching military professional knowledge base). Understanding the implications of a

single member operating under more than one profession simultaneously will require additional research. The military may provide a profitable case for analysis of this interesting alternative.

A second alternative concerning military professional knowledge explored in this thesis classifies the military as a single profession. Grace contends that the military is a single profession (which is consistent with the prevalent societal view as indicated in a majority of literature sources). He characterizes the special knowledge of the military as the “exercise of command” (1990:29) and provides evidence that the military has the capability and resources to adequately develop the command attribute into truly professional knowledge, but has so far failed to do so (as discussed in Chapter IV).

Under this alternative, the military professional is called to refocus on professional military education to adequately develop the body of professional knowledge central to military operations. Grace’s analysis implies that a single consistent definition of military professional knowledge must be adopted by the military. Grace states that the capability to form and develop a professional body of knowledge is present in the military, but the current focus of military education programs and many military members is towards the civilianization of the military. His suggestion of the “exercise of command” as the critical aspect of military knowledge requires additional refinement and clarification to be consistently adopted.

**Responsibility and Ethical Behavior.** The military operates in a unique environment that includes unlimited liability. The military professional operates under the rules of *credat emptor* in the same manner as the traditional professions because the client (the public as represented by the state) requires that the military abide by a higher

ethical standard. The study of ethics in the military is a promising area for additional research. The ethical standards that military officers are held to represents in a manner the level of responsibility and trust that the client will place in the military itself.

Military professionals must exhibit responsibility in their actions. Whether the military is found to be a profession or a calling, the state has placed the military in a unique position by sanctioning violence as an acceptable tool for the military. The monopoly on state-sponsored violence held by the military is granted (and maintained) only when the military acts in a responsible and responsive manner.

The responsibility of military professionals is a responsibility to society. As noted in Chapters IV and V, responsibility is grounded in ethics. Society judges the responsibility of the military on the ethics of military professionals.

The unique nature of the military professional-client relationship consists of the military as the profession and the state as the single client. The military also has sanction to use lethal force in situations of unlimited liability. These factors highlight the need for ethical structure in the professional-client relationship. Ethical performance, competence, and a self-sacrificing orientation are identified with “professional spirit” (Flexner, 1915:911) and are viewed as essential ingredients for professional behavior. Professional motivation includes the notion that each professional is working to improve the parent society. Altruism in the military, as in the professions, is a necessary ingredient for professional recognition.

**The Military as a Calling.** An important aspect highlighted in this research is the state sanction of military monopoly rights. As professional status of the military is partly contingent upon this state sanction, it is possible that a calling model is more

appropriate. Using the definition of a calling to evaluate the military implies that the military might never achieve the level of professionalism exhibited in the learned professions. In the learned professions, the monopoly over the body of knowledge is a result primarily of the nature of the knowledge itself. The military holds monopoly power due to the state's prior sanction of the military as the holder of that knowledge (and right to action). Future research may examine the military within the framework of a calling, where service orientation is more critical than the existence of special knowledge.

**The Trend Toward Occupation.** Callings and professions are distinct from occupations by their service orientation. Those vocations recognized as callings or professions are expected to be competent, conscientious (which implies a relationship to ethics), and service oriented.

The social community within the military profession appears to be diminishing, as discussed in Chapter V. Stovepiping within the military specialties, the ambiguity of the underlying professional knowledge base, and the apparent increase in careerism within the military may be eroding the sense of community in the profession. This erosion process may also be affecting the passage of Air Force norms and values to new members. While this topic is outside the scope of this thesis, it does provide an interesting area for future research.

There are steps the military can take to increase its social acceptance. To identify steps necessary to achieve societal acceptance requires a focus on those characteristics that are within the control of the vocation. The study of benefits coming out of societal

sanction will likely not further the understanding of the steps necessary to reach a position of sanction, and as such, is not focused on in this research.

The military as it stands today is more indicative of a calling than a profession (due to the lack of a common specialized knowledge base). However, as Moskos and others have pointed out, the military is moving away from the service orientation that identifies a calling. This implies that the military may adopt the occupational model and attempt to operate as a self-interested organization. Through the move to an all-volunteer force, the altering of recruitment incentives, and the rapid adoption of business procedures within the military structure, military members may be moving away from the “calling” mentality to a more “occupational” mentality.

An occupational oriented military may become a liability when considered in light of the unlimited liability clause. If military members and the organization as a whole are not focused on service as the primary motivation (service before self), but are instead accepted into the military through a more self-interested model, the dedication and devotion to duty needed in combat situations may be lacking.

## **Conclusion**

The problems addressed in this research point to the military moving away from the characteristics of profession or calling towards an occupation as described by Moskos (1977). This research identified characteristics necessary for the military and members of the military to strive for to increase professional within the military. Although the professional status of the military is not the primary focus of this research, it is clear that additional research should be focused in the area of identifying and refining a theoretical

base of knowledge common to all military professionals. This research would likely generate much additional research in professional norms and standards, as well as ethics and professional associations in the military arena.

The military, as discussed in this research, may not be a profession in the traditional sense. One critical element of increasing professional attitudes within the military may be an increased emphasis on service orientation. The Air Force may be moving towards the characteristics of an occupation (self-interest). More research is necessary to determine if this is indeed the case.

Research investigating the perceptions of how military members view themselves (as a profession, calling, or other) may provide valuable information. This type of research would help in understanding the military community.



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## Vita

Capt Jody B. Dow was born on 8 June 1969 in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. He graduated from Outlook High School in 1987 and entered undergraduate studies through a Reserve Officer Training Corps Scholarship. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Mathematics from Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana on 14 June 1991. He received his commission on 17 June 1991 through the ROTC program.

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